**THE THREE RAVENS – TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

The object of the present work is to discuss and analyse the ballad The Three Ravens.

Right from the title the reader might be reminded of something mystical and supernatural, given that the number three was seen as mystical and magic in the Middle Ages, together with the raven, indeed every animal had an allegorical meaning written in the bestiaries.

As a consequence, the present analysis is meant to confirm or deny the hypothesis.

In order to achieve the goal, a denotative analysis will be first provided, on a second moment connotative choices will be considered to find out how they had to meaning.

As far as lay out is concerned, the text is organized into ten stanzas of two lines each. The couples of lines are highlighted by rhyme couplets, which convey a regular and tidy rhythm along all the ballad.

To a first introductory stanza, in which the speaking voice introduces the characters, three black ravens, and set the scene, “sat on a tree”; a second one follows marking the actual beginning of the play.

The last line of the second stanza is organized as a direct speech, indeed the dialogues goes on until the fifth stanza: the ravens, personified by the prosopopoeia, are discussing the place where they should eat their breakfast and one of them suggests a field where a knight lies, protected by his hounds and hawks. Hence, their desire of nourish themselves with the knight’s corpse is broken.

Later on a “doe” appears in the scene and buries the body in a hole. Even the doe is personified, indeed its behaviour reminds the reader of a lady: “She lift up his bloudy hed” and “kist his wounds”.

The temporal reference “before the prime” adds to the mystical and magical atmosphere.

In conclusion, the ballad displays a series of personified animals, who surround a dead knight. Its clearly a reference to the supernatural, maybe to some heaten religion.